

A YOUNG MAN'S JOURNEY FROM FUNDAMENTALISM TO APOSTASY

January 22, 2013 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article)

The following is excerpted from an upcoming book *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms: Treasures from Archaeology*.

The life and career of **William Dever** is a loud warning about the great danger that exists in modern “evangelical” Christianity because of the many bridges that exist from “evangelicalism” to a bewildering variety of heresies and apostasies and blasphemies. These bridges include literature, internet blogs, contemporary music, unsound spiritual heroes such as C.S. Lewis, church growth gurus such as Rick Warren, and illicit affairs with the pop culture.

Dever was raised in the home of a fundamentalist preacher but rejected faith in a divinely-inspired Bible when he attended a modernistic school

“I went from a small Christian liberal arts college in Tennessee to a liberal Protestant theological seminary, where for the first time I was exposed to the critical study of the Bible. I resisted mightily, knowing that my faith was at risk. But in the end I was won over to the love, and the risks, of learning” (Dever, Foreword, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know?*, Eerdmans: 2001).

This “love of learning” is an idol when man’s puny intellect is raised to the level of final authority and is allowed to sit in judgment over God’s Word. Learning and education and scholarship are important when done to the glory of God and in submission to Jesus Christ the Lord, and the typical fundamentalist preacher needs to be more zealous in the pursuit of godly study, but when the pride of intellect reigns, sound scholarship becomes what the late David Otis Fuller called “scholarolatry.”

Dever was raised in some type of a Bible-believing home. He says:

“I was reared on the Bible, in a series of small towns in the South and Midwest, as well as in Jamaica, where my father was a preacher in various churches. Although I see in retrospect that he was no doubt a rather old-fashioned fundamentalist, I remember him not for his orthodoxy, but as a warm and compassionate man whose life was centered upon what he believed to be the Bible’s eternal truths and values” (Dever, Foreword, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know?*).

We don’t know any more about his father than this, but it appears that he was a typical evangelical in that he held to some semblance of theological orthodoxy but didn’t want to make a separatist issue of it, wanting to focus on “the positive” and “avoid dealing with personalities.” While being a “warm and compassionate man” is a good thing in a preacher, that is not enough. An unbeliever or a heretic can be warm and compassionate. Paul was both a warm and

compassionate man and a man with a fierce zeal for biblical truth and “theological orthodoxy.” The passionate, God-loving Psalmist esteemed all of the Lord’s precepts concerning all things to be right and HATED EVERY FALSE WAY” (Psalm 119:128).

We are to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3) and to mark and avoid heretics. This is an essential part of true Christianity. Earnest, forthright defense of the faith is not an optional part of Christianity, such as whether or not to order fries with one’s burger.

By the silence of Dever’s own testimony, he was not born again. Being Christianized and churchized, but lacking a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and being insufficiently disciplined to face the onslaught of modernism (as is true of probably the vast majority of young people growing up in “fundamentalist” homes today), the young Dever was a prime candidate to be captured by the wiles of the devil in the midst of end-time apostasy.

This is why we have published books such as *Keeping the Kids*, the *One Year Discipleship Course*, and *An Unshakeable Faith: A Christian Apologetics Course*. These can help parents prepare their young people to face the onslaught of unbelief in our day.

As for separation from error, it is essential. One reason why the Bible commands God’s people to mark and avoid those who teach contrary to sound apostolic doctrine is that false teachers have the satanic ability to deceive the hearts of the simple “by good words and fair speeches” (Romans 16:17-18).

Dever’s preacher father was unwise in allowing his son to attend unsound schools and was therefore culpable in his son’s apostasy.

Having lost his faith in the divine inspiration of Scripture as well as in the Divinity and sole Saviourhood of Jesus Christ, having capitulated to the siren call of end-time skepticism, Dever lurched along in spiritual darkness, from unbelief to unbelief. He obtained a doctorate in biblical theology at Harvard, “abandoned theology,” “fell under the spell of Rabbi-archaeologist Nelson Glueck,” converted to Judaism but remained a secular humanist rather than a theist.

Dever claims that “you cannot simply pick up the Bible and read it from beginning to end, as a connected story with a structured plot and believable characters,” that it is written “almost entirely by anonymous authors,” and contains “myths, legends, and folktales” (Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know?*).

But Jesus Christ said:

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17-18).

“Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:34-35).

The the Lord’s apostles said:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:23-25).

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:19-21).

At age 23 I faced the same battle with the devil that Dr. Dever faced as a young man. I, too, had grown up in a Christian home, a Baptist home, a Bible-believing home. I was taught the gospel and went through the motions of receiving Christ at a young age, but my relationship with Christ was not personal and real and my knowledge of the Bible was superficial. I loved the world more than Christ. I turned my back on the church and became a skeptic, even joining a Hindu organization. But when, by God’s grace, I was again confronted with the claims of Christ and the evidence for the powerful divine inspiration of the Bible at age 23, I surrendered and I believed.

Today, in the face of the full onslaught of end-time apostasy, I can testify with joy before God, I BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS GOD’S INFALLIBLE WORD AND JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY LORD AND SAVIOUR!

Thank the Lord for the grace of opened eyes, repentance, faith, and supernatural conversion.

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